

John 17:1-5

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Preacher: Rev. Jordan Senner

[0:00] Father, may the words of my mouth and the many meditations of our hearts be pleasing and! O Lord, our Maker and our Redeemer. Amen.

Until I was in an Evo this morning and the car clock on the Evo said 540 AM.

And I thought that explains why I feel the way I do right now. We're in John chapter 17. If you closed the Bible, it would be wonderful to go there.

In John 17, Jesus prays. And here we have the longest recorded prayer of Jesus. Amen. The prayer has roughly three sections to it.

Verses 1 to 5 is all about glory. Jesus says, Father, glorify your Son. Verses 6 to 19 are all about sanctity.

[1:17] Jesus says, Holy Father, sanctify. May the Father, may you sanctify my disciples in the truth. And then verses 20 to 26 are all about unity.

Righteous Father, may all my disciples in all future generations be united. May they be one as we are in one. So glory, sanctity, and unity. And all these things Jesus prays on the night before his death.

The next morning, he's going to be surrounded by crowds. And they're going to be jeering and sneering and crying out, crucify him.

And they're going to be spitting on him. And he'll be scourged and hung on a Roman cross. And as he hangs on the cross, the sun will darken, the earth will quake, and the temple curtain will break. And so now the night before his death, the Savior of the world savors a last meal with his disciples. He's just given them bread and wine. He's just washed their feet.

[2:17] He's answered their questions. He's addressed their fears. He's prepared them for their mission. And now Jesus lifts up his eyes to heaven. And he prays, Father, glorify your son.

That your son may glorify you. And as we look at this little beginning part of Jesus' prayer, we're just going to look at two words.

Glory and life. Glory and life. And we begin with glory. Glory. The main passion of Jesus' heart the night before his death and his whole ministry is his own glory.

He wants the world to see his glory. And we discover that it's a glory that he has shared with the Father from all eternity. The glory of the Son and the glory of the Father are one eternal glory.

And you see this in verses 1 and verse 5. Verse 1. Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son.

That the son may glorify you. That's the main prayer.

[3:24] And then he repeats the prayer in verse 5. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

It's the only prayer. It's the only petition in the first five verses of Jesus' prayer. And it's just repeated twice. Father, glorify me. This is what's on Jesus' heart the night before his death.

And I would like to suggest that the more we follow Jesus, the more we become like Jesus' disciples, the more we will share Jesus' passion for his own glory. What does glorify mean?

What is Jesus praying here? See, it can mean honor. I glorify you by honoring you, by treating you as of ultimate significance and treating you with ultimate allegiance and affection.

So it would be, Father, the hour has come. Honor your son so that the son may honor you. But it can also mean manifest or to make something visible.

[4:29] I glorify you, Father, by making visible your nature and your character. In other words, it would say, Father, the hour has come.

Show the world who I am that I may show the world who you are. Now, what is most shocking about Jesus' prayer here is that he believes that the hour of his death is precisely the right moment for Jesus to show the world who the Father is.

Remember, glory in John is the visible manifestation, the visible revelation of God's character. It's God's unapproachable beauty.

It's what we would see if we could see the face of God and live. And Jesus is praying on the night before his death that on the next day when he wears a crown of thorns and when blood drips down his face and when he is beaten and bruised, that the world would see in the face of that beaten and bruised Savior the very face of God.

Many Christians in the early centuries of the church thought that the death and resurrection of Jesus should be thought of as a sequence. Suffering followed by glory.

[5:50] Humiliation followed by exaltation. But the way that Jesus prays here is different altogether. Jesus doesn't pray simply that he will be glorified after his suffering.

He prays that he will be glorified in his suffering. And Jesus doesn't pray that he'd be honored after his humiliation. He prays that he would be honored in his humiliation.

Jesus doesn't just pray that he'd be exalted after his death. He prays that he would be exalted in his dying. So that the world may know who he is as he gives his life away for the world.

And so that he may show the world who the Father is. As he does the work that the Father gave him to do. Are you with me? Jesus prays, Father, glorify me.

Because in this way, the world's going to know who I am. And when the world knows who I am, the world will know who you are. And that's the whole reason I've come is to show him your glory.

[6:54] It's just one simple prayer in our passage, glory. And yet the ramifications of it are bigger than just Jesus and the Father. There are ramifications for us, for our life.

Glory leads to our life. And this is part of the power of Jesus' little prayer here. Jesus' prayer in its full power and potency is experienced when we come to see that God is glorified as he gives us life. The structure of the first part of Jesus' prayer is intended to show us this. You can think of it as almost a series of concentric circles. You know what concentric circles are? Like circles within a circle within a circle.

And so verses 1 and 5 that we just looked at is almost like the outer circle. Father, glorify your Son. Father, glorify me. It's all about glory.

And yet if you step into the middle circle, that's verses 2 and 4. It's all about giving. So in verse 4, I have glorified you, Father, on earth.

[7:56] Having accomplished the work, here it is, that you gave me to do. And so then we ask, what did the Father give Jesus to do? And if you go up to verse 2, you see that the Father gave Jesus all authority over all flesh.

Meaning he gave him authority over all humanity. To do what? To give eternal life to all whom the Father has given him. And so it's all about giving.

Jesus accomplishes the work that the Father gave him to do. Using the authority that the Father has given him over the whole world. To give life to all the people that the Father gives to the Son. And so the outer circle is about glory. The middle circle is about giving. And the inner circle is about life. It's the life that Jesus gives to his disciples.

Verse 3. And this is eternal life. That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

[9:02] It's all about the life of knowing. And here we see that we only experience eternal life by knowing the eternal God. I love the way that one author put it.

Eternal life here is not so much everlasting life we live forever. Although that's true in God's presence. Eternal life here is not everlasting life. It is personal knowledge of the everlasting one. So here's the logic of the prayer. First, glory. Jesus prays for God's glory. Second, giving. God's glory is revealed through giving. And third, what Jesus gives is eternal life.

Jesus lived to die for the world. And he died that the world may live. And the logic of this prayer from glory to giving to knowing the eternal life of God actually circles back on itself.

Because in order to know the eternal life of God. And to experience fellowship and communion with God. And to know his great love for us. And for our love for him to be stirred and strengthened and solidified.

[10:09] We have to know the glory of God. And the glory of God is the revelation of the character of God. And shows who God is as he gives himself to us.

And so there's this cyclical effect. That as we come to know God. We, like Jesus, pray that he would reveal his glory. So that we would know more and more of him.

Jesus prays, Father, show the world who I am. That I may show the world who you are. See, this is the deep dynamism of Jesus' life and his prayer.

And our Christian lives and our Christian prayers. We need to see Jesus' glory in order to know God. And we need to know God.

In order to experience the eternal life he has for us. And everything in our lives rides on the Father answering Jesus' prayer.

[11:09] Everything in our church rides ultimately on the Father answering this prayer. And everything for the salvation of the world ultimately rides on the Father answering Jesus' prayer.

This is the great claim of the gospel. That Jesus' prayer to be glorified has been answered. And this is one of the marvelous things about this passage.

And I want us to think about today. Jesus doesn't give us any commands to be obeyed today. Jesus isn't even teaching us how to pray. He does that in the Lord's prayer.

The disciples ask him, Lord, teach us how to pray. And Jesus says, This is how you should pray. Our Father who art in heaven. Jesus isn't teaching us how to pray here. Rather, Jesus himself is praying for himself and praying for his disciples.

But he is doing that in the presence of his disciples. He wants his prayer to be overheard by his disciples. He wants his praying to be overheard by us.

[12:11] And the question is, why? I think there are two simple reasons. I think Jesus wants us to know his own heart. You know, there's an old adage that, Tell me what you pray for, and I will tell you what you care about.

And here, Jesus wants us to hear what he prays about, so that we would know what he really cares about. Jesus wants us to know his heart.

But Jesus also wants our hearts to be strengthened. And I don't know if you've ever had this experience before of praying with somebody else. I've had it many times, where I'm praying with somebody else, and they're praying for themselves, or maybe they're praying for me, or something that's going on in the world.

And I get the sense as they pray that they are a lot closer to the heart of God than I am. Or there's an aspect of God's heart and his life and his generosity that I haven't quite grasped in my life, and they get it, and it's implicit in the way that they're praying.

And that's not meant to be a shameful thing. I mean, this just happens to all of us. I think that's actually a gift from God. Because in not just praying alone, but praying with another, the prayers of that other become a means through which God ministers to our own hearts.

[13:34] A means through which God draws us near to him and reveals to us the greatness and the goodness of his own heart. And I think that's something of what's supposed to be happening. As we listen to Jesus pray, it is meant to strengthen our own hearts as we hear what is on his heart and the things that he brings to the Father.

And so as we come away with this passage and we walk into our week, I don't want to say to you, go and do this. I don't want to say to you, learn how to pray more and pray like Jesus.

That's not the point of this passage. The point of this passage is how can we rest in the reality that Jesus is praying for us. And Jesus always prays for us, right?

Some of my favorite passages in the New Testament, Romans 8 and Hebrews 7, talk about how Jesus always lives to make intercession for us. And have you ever wondered what in the world Jesus prays for us?

Or what he's praying as he sits on the throne of the universe right now in the presence of the Father? I think John 17 might be some of our best guesses. And I think there's two things that we can do as we go into this week.

[14:45] And the first is we can rest in the fact that Jesus has been glorified. The Father has answered his prayer. Jesus has been glorified. Now some of us may struggle to see this, right?

We read the news headlines or we look at the world around us, our own lives, and we see chaos and we see carnage and we see mess and we say, where is the reign of God in all this? Where is the glory of God in all this?

And yet the good news of the gospel is that it's through his death that he triumphed over sin. His death did not look like a victory, but it was. It's through his resurrection that he triumphs over death and through his ascension that he triumphs over evil.

And now he sits at the right hand of the Father and all creation worships him, or at least one day will. And all heaven bows down before him and cries, holy, holy, holy, because he who laid down his life for us now sits on the throne above all thrones and dominions in eternal glory at the right hand of the Father and nothing will dethrone him.

Jesus, his prayer has been answered by the Father and he is glorified. And that can give us great confidence and strength and courage.

[16:05] And the second thing is that we can rest in the fact that Jesus has given us eternal life. Not only has he been glorified, but he has finished the work that the Father gave him to do.

I think this is important for us because some of us struggle with assurance. Maybe it's just because of the ups and downs of our own lives, our own sins and addictions, or fears and failures and questions and doubts.

But so often as the ups and downs of our own lives happen, we have ups and downs where we doubt the love that God has for us and the strength of his salvation. We wonder, am I really in the firm grip of God or is he letting go of me?

And I think it's one of the reasons why the great Puritan theologian, John Owen, once wrote, the greatest sorrow and burden you can lay on the Father, the greatest unkindness you can do to him is not to believe that he loves you.

See, Jesus prays his prayer in part so that his disciples will really believe the love that the Father has for them. God so loved the world, Jesus said earlier, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[17:27] John says in his letter to the church, if you believe in the name of the Son of God, you may know, you may have confidence that you have eternal life. Jesus has done it all, in other words, is what we're supposed to hear.

Jesus has paid it all. Sin had left a crimson stain but he washed it white as snow. Everything that needed to be done for our salvation, past, present, and future, has been done in the Lord Jesus. When he cried from the cross, it is finished and it is accomplished. That meant our forgiveness, that meant our reconciliation, that meant every grace we needed to make it through sin and suffering in the days ahead and it meant remaking us in the image of God so that one day we would reign in his new creation with him and see him face to face.

You see, this is meant to be a source of great confidence and comfort for the people of God. That when God, when Jesus prays that he would be glorified, the Father was delighted to glorify him. And when Jesus was glorified, it meant eternal life for us. And as sturdy and solid as the eternal glory of God is, now that's how sturdy and solid the eternal life that he has given us is.

[18:45] And so we look to the Lord Jesus Christ today and we know that we are loved, we know that we are in fellowship with God, we know that we can rest secure in him, and we know that he will be our joy and our salvation yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

So brothers and sisters, this is Jesus. This is what he's praying. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Amen.